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IDENTS:

7 MAY 1970
1. WIRE SERVICE STORY FOLLOWS VERBATIM:

WASHINGTON-A FORMER U.S. GOVERNMENT REFUGEE WORKER ASSERTED TODAY THAT AMERICAN PILOTS ENGAGED IN "INDISCRIMINATE BOMBING OF CIVILIAN POPULATION CENTERS" IN LAOS DURING THE THREE YEARS HE WORKED THERE. HIS TESTIMONY WAS DISPUTED BY A DEFENSE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL. . . .

RONALD RICKENBACK, WHO SERVED AS A REFUGEE RELIEF OFFICER WITH THE U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN 1968 AND 1969, TOLD THE SENATE REFUGEE SUBCOMMITTEE THAT HE PERSONALLY INSPECTED THE CASUALTIES AND THE DAMAGE DONE IN BOMBING RAIDS ON FOUR VILLAGES IN CENTRAL LAOS.

DENNIS J. DOOLIN, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, TOLD THE SENATORS U.S. PILOTS FLY BOMBING RUNS OVER LAOS UNDER "RIGOROUS" RULES "TO MINIMIZE CIVILIAN CASUALTIES AND CONTROL

(cont)

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TO [] DESTRUCTION AND YET STILL FIGHT A WAR."

"WE ARE AWARE THAT MISTAKES ARE MADE AND ACCIDENTS HAPPEN," DOOLIN SAID. "BUT WE BELIEVE THESE ARE LIMITED."

THE THRUST OF DOOLIN'S TESTIMONY WAS TO DISPUTE RICKENBACH'S ASSERTION THAT THE BOMBINGS WERE "INDISCRIMINATE" WHEN VILLAGES WERE HIT. HE SAID, "TARGETS OF OPPORTUNITY" - THOSE NOT PRE-SELECTED - MUST BE "VALIDATED BY ENGLISH-SPEAKING LAO FORWARD AIR GUIDES" BEFORE THEY ARE HIT.

BUT RICKENBACH, IN HIS TESTIMONY AND IN AN INTERVIEW WITH REPORTERS LATER, SAID THE BOMBS WERE DROPPED BY U.S. PILOTS WHO COULD NOT LOCATE THEIR TARGETS AND COULD NOT RETURN TO THEIR CARRIERS TO BASES IN THAILAND WITH BOMBS. (sic).

HE SAID HE HAD VISITED VILLAGES, WITH NO MILITARY INSTALLATIONS OR WEAPONS, WHICH HAD BEEN BOMBED. IN ONE, BAN DONE, WITH 100 STRUCTURES AND 2,000 PEOPLE, FIVE LAOTIANS WERE KILLED AND MORE THAN 100 INJURED WHEN TWO U.S. JETS MADE FOUR BOMBING AND STRAFING PASSES OVER IT IN THE SPRING OF 1967, HE SAID.

"IF THE TRUTH IS TO BE KNOWN," HE TESTIFIED, "MORE HAVOC AND MEANINGLESS DESTRUCTION, RATHER THAN MILITARY ADVANTAGE, (cont)

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TO [] HAS BEEN WROUGHT BY WHAT CAN IN MANY CASES ONLY BE
CHARACTERIZED AS INDISCRIMINATE BOMBING OF CIVILIAN POPULATION
CENTERS."

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